



## **bald eagle**

*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Aves
Order:	Falconiformes
Family:	Accipitridae

### **Features**

An adult bald eagle is 30 to 31 inches long. This large bird has a dark brown body with some black feathers. In adults, the head, neck, and tail are white. Its bill, eyes, and feet are yellow. Both sexes are similar in appearance. Females are larger than males.

### **Natural History**

The bald eagle lives near rivers or large lakes. It eats small birds, carrion (dead animals), fish, small mammals, and wounded or ill waterfowl. It perches in the open branches of a tall tree near a body of water, open field, or forest. Its call is "kweek-kik-ik-ik-ik-ik." Spring migration begins in February or March. When courting, the male and female lock talons in flight and fall several hundred feet together in a series of somersaults. The nest is built in a large cottonwood or sycamore tree. Two or three white eggs are laid in March or April. Young do not attain adult plumage for three or more years. Fall migration starts in October. Illegal hunting, use of the pesticide DDT, and human

disturbances and persecution led to this species' decline. Recently, the bald eagle population has been making a comeback aided by habitat protection and improvement, citizen awareness, and changes in pesticides.

### **Habitats**

Mississippi River; interior rivers and streams; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs

### **Iowa Status**

endangered; native

Illegal hunting, use of the pesticide DDT, and human disturbances and persecution led to this species' decline.

### **Iowa Range**

summer: Mississippi River and larger interior rivers and reservoirs; winter: statewide

### **Bibliography**

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.  
*Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.